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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

Sec 14-3

DATE: October 12, 1977

SUBJECT: Right of Option

PARTICIPANTS: Fernando De la Rúa, Radical Party Member
and Former Member of Congress
William H. Hallman, Political Counselor

TIME & PLACE: October 12 - A Restaurant in Buenos Aires

DISTRIBUTION: CHARGE, POL (Human Rights File, De La Rúa Bio),
DATT, SY, LEGATT, ECOM, ARA/ECA, INR/RAR

De la Rúa said he believes the government's proclaiming recently a highly regulated Right of Option was a device to appear to restore constitutionality to government which will have no practical effect upon imprisoned persons. He said that the Supreme Court had leaned heavily against the government on this issue and that the "right" had been restored to call away criticism--even while it was hedged with so many rules and regulations as to make exercises of the "right" a practical impossibility. I asked whether the restored Right of Option might not be a useful way of turning loose a great many prisoners who in fact have little or no connection with terrorism. De la Rúa said he doubted there were many such prisoners, and that in any event it did not seem likely that the government would permit terrorist links to be restored by seepage back into the country of persons who had opted to leave it.

De la Rúa's cynical attitude toward the restored Right of Option interested me, since among civilian politicians I know personally he is the most outspoken loyalist to the military Junta and believer that almost all actions taken by security forces are right and proper and do indeed net the right people. De la Rúa is fascinated by the fanaticism he says he has observed in the terrorist movement--which includes a willingness to abduct and extort from members of one's own family--and also by the constant use of terrorist

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Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

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threats against the lives and families of persons who refuse to cooperate with the movement. De la Rua says he knows of many instances of persons who, for example, were recruited just to "hand out leaflets" or "put up posters"--when in actual fact a great deal more was planned and persons, especially young persons, who were merely sympathetic bystanders found themselves suddenly involved in police killing or armed attacks. Thus inadvertently deeply involved the sympathizers were forced to become full-time members of terrorist organizations.



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